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SOME HINTS ABOUT MINING COAL.

BY THOMAS H. LOVE.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Institute :

The subject assigned me could be made to extend throughout a large portion of the coal fields of the United States, and is one which does not at all times justify the writer. I will endeavor, however, in a practical way to illustrate a few facts which are not intended to reflect discredit upon any one individual, or to criticise those who are engaged in the industry of mining coal in our own state more than some of our sister states; but to show briefly that many of the difficulties met with in mining coal are brought about by impractical methods through attempts to economize in the wrong manner.

The price of mining has been reduced greatly and day labor accordingly, from the boss to the trapper, which has, in many instances, tended toward increasing the cost in the production of coal. This is not at all times to be attributed to the inefficiency of the management, but because of a misguidance of a much demanded economy.

The practice of economy in mining coal is just as essential as in any other branch of business, but not on the penny-wise and pound-foolish principle; for we believe that disaster and ruin have been brought about in this manner, and that all the employes in and around coal mines feel the effect to-day.

In this I do not exonerate the man who holds a certificate of competency or of service, or the one who claims to have had all the practical experience necessary to become perfect as a mine manager, for when we calculate his age for the time he states he has been employed in and around the mine, we often find him to be from one hundred and twenty-four to one hundred and fifty years of age, plus six, which was the time he went to work as a trapper boy.

The modern practice of economy is to employ a man as manager who will reduce expenses and increase the output of coal, regardless of what methods he adopts to do it. He usually attempts to do this by cutting off valuable and practical assistance, and as a final resort, reduces his own salary in order to

accomplish the much desired result. To do this something of importance must be neglected, it being beyond the power of human skill for one man to do the work of so many, and time proves that much has been lost in mistaken ideas of this kind.

I will further assert that great losses are met with in an experimental way, and which is all chargeable to the cost of production of coal. The practical miner is leaving his former place of toil and seeking other employment, feeling that he has no further assurance of sufficient wages to support himself and family; and those who remain as a matter of necessity, do not attempt to provide for their own safety as they should do. In this we are led to believe that the production of coal to-day requires even greater skill than in the past; yet the unskilled are largely in the majority.

Valuable mines have been flooded by discontinuing the services of a mining engineer, and dangerous elements, such as gas and dust, have been permitted to accumulate, when the cost of removal would be naught compared with what would be liable to follow. I have mentioned but a few of the many neglects which daily occur in the great coal fields, and when we calculate cost brought about in this way, I think you will agree with me that the present uneconomical methods are leading to a greater cost of production.

I would not be doing justice to this subject without including that we see too many seams of coal worked on one system; and in view of the fact that they vary in thickness and nature of roof and floor. There should be more thought given to a wide work system, which would, I think, reclaim a greater per cent. of coal at a less cost, and thus enable the operator to pay a higher rate per ton to the miner.

Discussion on the paper read by Mr. Love and on the matters treated of in the President's annual address, which had been read at the first session, was opened by Secretary Haseltine, who said, among other things, speaking of cheap labor:

SECRETARY HASELTINE: We meet it continuously in our official positions. I think there is not a mine inspector here but will bear me out in the statement of the fact that there are more cheap men in the mine business than there were when he first went on the force. And I think Mr. Short there will bear me out in this statement, that during all this time matters have been drifting downwards and to-day it is more difficult for a skilled

man to get a place at remunerative wages than it was three or four years ago. I contend that we cannot expect to have any better results as long as this state of affairs exists. I think Mr. Love has presented to us a line of facts to which we will all subscribe, and I think it is a subject which should be thoroughly discussed.

PRESIDENT ORTON: This is a subject which I know almost every mining man here has a different opinion on, and I don't think you will find any better time to express these opinions than now.

CAPTAIN MORRIS: In regard to our secretary's remarks about the way the coal mining operators are doing, I will say that our worthy chief does not often say what is not right, and I think he has surely said what is right now. It is the truth, and nothing but the truth. I visited a mine shortly after my return from the old country, where they had a good man for superintendent, a man whose reputation was good everywhere he had been. That company came to the conclusion they were paying too much to this man, though they were only paying him sixty dollars, and if ever a man was worth a hundred dollars, that man was. A new man was put in his place, at fifty dollars, and the results bore out Mr. Love's statements. Among other things, there was a forty foot pillar between the double entries, and he came to the conclusion that fifteen, eighteen, or twenty at the most was plenty to leave there. He took a piece off, with the result you can all guess. Another thing is that it is not the practical man now that gets the job, — it's the uncles and the aunts and the cousins. (Laughter.) Isn't it a fact, gentlemen? And I happen to have no relation at all: that is the reason I am out. There is certainly more truth than poetry in Mr. Love's paper, and think it ought to be carefully considered by each and every one. It would no doubt be better for the operators if they would select men who are careful and who would try to get all the coal out even by spending a little money. Every pound of coal we lose to-day is gone, never to be got again. Every pound

of coal that is not taken out, is a loss not only to us as individuals, but to the inhabitants of the country in general.

MR. BEATTIE: About four years ago, I attended my first meeting of the Institute, and have attended regularly since, and at every meeting I have heard the operator criticised. But I have never heard anything suggested to remedy the conditions complained of, and if we are organized for any purpose, it is to try and ferret out the best thing to do in this case. I do not feel competent to suggest anything, but there are gentlemen here who are, I know; and I would like to hear some suggestions made by which the mining committee of the legislature can frame laws whose enactment will remedy these evils, if such can be done.

MR. HARRY: I do not believe all you say about those things. I think the tendency is upward instead of downward in regard to a practical man's wages. I think it is in our country, — here is a man who has been down there for thirty years, and I do not think he has lost anything in salary. I have been there for a good many years myself and I have not found it that way. I will admit that there are a good many cheap bosses down there, but I claim that the companies that do any business are paying better salaries than they ever paid and are after the men who demand good salaries. But, as Mr. Beattie said, I want to hear some remedy suggested. I think the best remedy is for every man to fit himself to command a good salary. If he is not worth a salary, the operators will not pay it; but if he gets in shape to command a salary, he can get it now in the coal mines of Ohio.

(Here Mr. Brophy made some extended remarks relative to the condition of miners and plans for their improvement, which, while entertaining and points well taken, were not germane to the question under discussion, and are not for that reason here introduced.)

PRESIDENT ORTON: The subject upon which Mr. Brophy has given us discussion also needs attention, but is not strictly

apropos to Mr. Love's paper; and I feel if we enter upon the discussion of that topic, we will not get through in time to see St. Peter or any other luminary. We will be glad to listen to further remarks in the line of Mr. Love's paper, viz., the tendency of the times toward the employment of low grade men at low prices, by which the coal territory is being mutilated and the coal permanently lost.

MR. LOVE: My object was to show that the present economical system of mining coal is not economical. Hiring cheaper bosses and doing away with valuable men results at the end of the year in the coal costing more than before, when practical men were employed, even from the boss to the trapper.

MR. KANE: I believe this question is one which should engage the considerate attention of the members of this Institute, — not only of all the mine bosses and operators, but it should receive the attention of the legislature of the state. Now, there is a cause for everything, and business men do not do things without good reasons therefor. So if the mines of Ohio are being mutilated by cheap mine bosses, there is a cause for it; and the cause is that the coal operator is not losing anything by that mutilation, or is ignorant of the mutilation and its effects. Mr. Morris, in his paper, speaks of some mines in England and Wales where it is pretty safe to say not over three to five per cent. of the coal is lost. I heard a mine inspector say yesterday that he knows places in the state of Ohio where thirty-three per cent. of the coal is lost. Now just think what that means, — and when I hear a mine inspector of Ohio, let it be either the chief or a sub-inspector, make a statement with regard to the mines of the state, I look on that statement as authoritative and one a person can go on, because they have opportunity for seeing things which other people have not; and they have their official character and integrity to maintain, which they cannot do by telling falsehoods. Say from three to five per cent. loss in the mines our friend visited, which he said were from eighteen hundred to two thousand feet deep; and here in Ohio, where they go straight into them by way of drifts, and where the

deepest is not over one hundred and fifty, or say three hundred feet deep, which is only one-sixth the depth of the deep mines he saw, and to think that in some of these mines thirty-three per cent. of the coal is being lost for eternity, doing no good to man or beast, or the community, or anything else. Why should there be such a difference, especially seeing that it must be more difficult to excavate the coal from two thousand feet below the surface, than from one to three hundred feet? Granting that they have pretty good roof in both places, which they have in Ohio, what reason is there for this difference? My theory may be wrong, but I think it is right. Those mines are invariably owned by the people who operate the mines. That is, the coal owner over there is, as a rule, the proprietor of the land that he excavates the coal from under. If my information is correct, the largest portion of the operators of coal in Ohio simply pay a royalty for the coal that they excavate and send out to the surface. Now then, another condition comes in there. In that country the operator pays for all the coal sent out, — nut, slack, and everything except dirt. In Ohio the operators only pay for the lump coal that comes out over an inch and a quarter screen. You will see that it is the object, where the operator owns the coal, to get all the coal out. I feel, as Mr. Beattie does, that there has never been any remedy suggested for the evil, and that this body ought to be able to devise some means of redress against this wrong which is being perpetrated against the coal operators themselves and against the people at large. I really think it is only correct and just to Mr. Love to say that he has suggested a remedy here in his suggestion to use long wall system of mining where practicable, and by the employment of efficient mine bosses. Mr. Harry says that if a man fits himself for a good salary he can command it. There is no doubt about that; still that is not any argument against the employment of cheap bosses by operators, under false notions of economy, no matter how many good men there may be. The time will come when the coal of Ohio will be exhausted, and if you lose now from one-fourth to a third under mismanagement, the people of the state will have one of their most precious

minerals taken away from them probably a hundred, or two or three hundred years sooner than it ought to be. It is a thing this body ought to look into, if it has any business for existing at all. It ought to appoint a committee of investigation to make the proper suggestions to the legislature in order to remedy this wrong.

MR. PRICE: In my humble opinion, in order to bring this about, you would have to revolutionize the American people. The American people are entirely different from those of the old country, especially in mining. They do not hesitate to go to expense; but the idea in this country is, put your hand in your right-hand pocket to-day and put the dollar in the left-hand pocket to-morrow. Now, that is the principle which nearly all the business men in the mining districts work on. When I am through I would like my friend Morris to get up and make comparison between the miners in England and Wales and those in America. I come from Jackson county. There is very fine coal there, and every man that will come along with an auger, who can bore a hole and fill the hole full of powder, and can get a shovel, can get work if they are only running one day a week. Now, when I was a young man and followed mining, when I would be out of work and left the district I worked in and traveled to another in company with another man; when you asked for work they would look at you from foot to head and look to see if there were any black marks about you where you were cut with coal, and to see if your legs were a little bowed, — they would look for all the marks of a practical miner, and if they could not see these characteristics of a miner they didn't want him. How is to-day? I have not done any work to amount to anything for over thirty-five years, and there are miners in Jackson county who have softer hands than I have who dig coal. Not one-fourth of the miners in that county are really practical miners. As for mine bosses wages, in that county different wages are paid, but I don't think there is any man in that county but gets pretty good wages. At the same time, to satisfy the operators, they have to employ these kind of men. This is not the case with myself, for I don't employ that class of miners at

all. Many years ago when I came to Jackson, there were twenty of this class of miners in the mine, and from these twenty men they got a thousand bushels of coal. I let them go as easy as I could and picked up good, practical, old country miners, and I got sixteen hundred bushels from — of them.

CAPTAIN MORRIS: We all know that the miners over there in the old country are brought up in and around the mines; consequently they are more practical than in this country. There is not a place I was in where they have to mine their coal. Our Ohio miner works more in a day than those do in a whole week. Where it is necessary for the coal to be mined, it is mined and not blasted up till it goes all to slack and nut. We have many places in Ohio to-day where every bit of coal ought to be mined, and it would be a benefit to the miner as well as the landowner, but of course it is not quite so profitable to the operator. There is too much powder used to-day and coal destroyed by it. Concerning the cost of mining on the long wall system, I learned from access to the books of several companies there, every place where they paid thirty cents per ton for mining, that coal cost that company on top of the shaft, or in the car, ninety cents. You ask how in the world is that? It is this way. Where they had three hundred miners working by day mining and loading it, there would be two hundred and fifty or three hundred working at night keeping the roads open for the next day. They get their timber from Norway as there is not a stick of timber in the country they can use. They pay thirty cents for mining and the dead work costs them sixty. Somebody says they do not make as much money there as the operators here. They make more.

MR. HARRY: I don't like to hear the operators rapped over the head like they are here to-night without defending them. In talking of the mines of Wales as compared with those in this country, there is not an Ohio company that could bear the expense of opening those, let alone running one. There is no use comparing them with Ohio. There is not a State in the Union better managed as far as the mines are concerned than the State of Ohio. There is not a State in the Union that has the plats of the mines

kept up better than the State of Ohio. The operators know exactly what their men are doing in the mines in every section of the State I have been in, and I have been in about all of it. And there is a great deal of difference in mining coal in different parts of the State. Some cannot be mined as it has been proposed here to-night to mine it. I cannot think the operators who are mining coal to-day are running the mines in such bad condition unless they cannot do otherwise. In many parts they are forced to do it on account of competition of other states, and they have got to mine the coal and get it into the market as cheap as possible. As far as legislation is concerned, it would seem that you would have to legislate all around us, if you do it in Ohio.

MR. BEATTIE: What I meant to convey when I said there had been no remedy suggested was that it should be taken to the legislature. We all know that these conditions complained of do exist pretty generally. If, as Mr. Harry says, the operators do know what is going on in the mines, they ought to be made criminally guilty of extravagance; and my purpose in making that suggestion was with the idea that somebody would make the motion to have a committee appointed to talk the matter over with the committee on mines and mining of the legislature. The legislature of Ohio has protected other properties of the people, and they can legally and constitutionally protect the coal in the hills.

PRESIDENT ORTON: I want to correct an impression which Mr. Harry's remarks may create in the minds of some. I don't think for a moment anybody speaking here means to reflect blame or disgrace on the coal operators. I do not blame the coal operator. If I were a coal operator to-day I would do as they do,—get as much as I could and save as much as I could. But what I do blame is the system that makes it possible for them to do these things. No man can follow out these quixotic ideas pushed forward here and mine coal to-day; and I also know that the tendency towards the calling of mining is growing daily less in this State. But there is a point in my paper which I think is well taken and that is, why, when all of us—operators, mechanics, outsiders and all—agree that this unhealthy condition exists in this industry,

why not take steps to make it safe and sound and for the best interests of all. That the coal has been squandered, cannot be denied by anybody. Why not get the best and most out of it while we are using it? Why not protect our posterity? If it cannot be done any other way, let the State condemn all mining property and take charge of it. Everything managed by the government is managed well. Look at the postal system: isn't it well regulated? Isn't the service satisfactory? I, for one, would be willing to see the government take charge of the railroads and mines. If the government owned the mineral we may be sure it would all come out, especially if done under the civil service act. The more people government has on the payroll, the better off I think the country is. It is a big question and we cannot expect to mould public sentiment at once; but there are some things we can do now. We know the abuses existing in this State at the present time, and even if this State mines less coal in the years subsequent to the time we begin this agitation, it will last longer. If other states are foolish enough to squander their coal, let Ohio protect hers. Let us appoint a committee of the best and strongest men from this association, representing all sides of the question, and see what can be done towards saving what we have.

MR. RICHIE: The coal operators of this State are not doing away with high priced men. There are more high priced men than there ever have been in the State of Ohio. The responsibility of running the mine rests now with the civil engineer. Years ago I heard an operator in Ohio say it was not necessary to have so many high priced mine bosses; they had the civil engineer to see to the work going on systematically: they wanted the men who would get the most coal at the least expense—didn't care how small the wages paid them.

MR. HARRY: I do not mean to say that I do not want to get all the coal out of the mine as systematically as we can; but the tone of the talk has been that the operator is all at fault for not employing higher priced men. I only tried to defend them on

that point. I believe three or four years ago I made complaint myself about the waste of coal in Ohio and I think it ought to be stopped.

MR. KANE: Is this waste necessary?

MR. HARRY: No, sir.

MR. KANE: If it is not necessary, somebody must be to blame.

MR. HARRY: It is competition and prices that are to blame.

MR. KANE: Is anybody benefited by leaving the coal there?

MR. HARRY: No, I do not think there is.

MR. KANE: How can competition govern that?

MR. HARRY: Everybody has got to run as cheap as possible, and in some cases it costs more to get the coal out than it is worth.

PROFESSOR LORD: This discussion is very interesting, but there is no natural limit to it. To bring the matter to issue, I will make a motion.

(The following resolution proposed by Professor Lord and seconded by Mr. Harry, was unanimously adopted.)

Resolved, That a committee be appointed by the President of this Institute from among its members or others representing the different mining interests of the State, which shall appear before the legislature and request that a committee be appointed by the legislature to investigate the matter of wasteful mining of coal in this State. Said committee to be named and members of same notified of their appointment, within thirty days after the adjournment of this meeting.

Secretary Haseltine announced that arrangements would probably be made for a joint meeting of this Institute with the Institute of western Pennsylvania during the coming summer, at which papers would be read and excursions made to the mines of

that region. They would all receive ample notice if the arrangements were perfected.

The name of Frederick Miller, of Corning, was proposed for membership, and he was duly elected.

Upon motion, meeting adjourned.